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## **Benefits of Yoga**



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### **The origin of the word Yoga**

**Yoga** (*pronounced as Yog*) is a field of knowledge originating from the Vedas. The word Yoga is a derivative from the Sanskrit word *Yuja*, i.e. to join, unite, connect, and link up.

### **Instinctive knowledge & acquired knowledge**

The human form of life is the highest amongst all species. At birth the other forms of life are endowed with higher inborn knowledge (*swabhāvic jñāna*). For example a puppy of 10-12 months swims and finds its way out of a pool. A human child of 1-12 months would drown and die. Animals know what to eat and what not to eat whereas the human child has to be fed for a much longer period.

However, humans have a better potential to acquire new knowledge (*neimittic jñāna*) which earns him a living and satisfy needs. A dog satiates itself only when it is fed, Stray dogs feed on thrown away food.

### **The learning curve of human beings, another gift from God**

Mankind has tremendous potential to learn from others as well as from God's creation - the universe. Gifted with a brain, humans sift good from evil, and voice to communicate to others. We can complain and have problems solved (e.g. consult a doctor when sick) whereas the other living species cannot do so.

Man has efficiently used acquired knowledge on which he has built up further knowledge and invented so many things. Most of these inventions can be traced back to the Vedic age when sages were applying the Vedic knowledge into their day-to-day life. Through Yoga, elucidated further the seminal knowledge of the Vedas.

### **Yogābhyāsa (the practice of Yoga)**

Expounding on the mantras of the *Ishvara Stuti Prārthanā Upāsanā* in the Samskāra Vidhi, Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati explains '*kasmei devā yahavishā vidhema*' in unequivocal terms as *yogya yogābhyāsa*, i.e. – practice of Yoga, contemplation and meditation, to be ever alert and apply our inner faculties for better focused, not only during worship, but at all times and in all spheres of life.

## What is Yoga?

Aphorism 1.02 of the Yoga Darshanam (YD), the authoritative compilation of Yoga philosophy by Sage Patanjali, describes Yoga as ***Yogashchittavritti nirodhah***, that is - Yoga is the (*nirodhah*) silencing of (*chitta vritti*) the flux of mental and emotional activities.

The present-day belief is that Yoga is the bundle of exercises (*āsana-vyāyāma*) to remain fit physically. The exercises are vital to keep the body fit. Yet, to synchronise the body, mind and spirit it is essential to integrate the eight-fold process of Yoga (*ashtānga yoga*). The first two steps are the dos and don'ts (*Yama & Niyama*), a code of conduct for righteous living.

## How does Yoga help in day-to-day life?

A well-parked car cannot move without the driver in the seat. Robotised or remote controlled equipment need instructions from an operator. The soul (*ātmā*) is compared to the traveller and the physical body as the chariot; The intellect (*mana*) as the coachman chooses the route following instructions from the traveller; The intellect commands the mind (*buddhi*) - the reins that connect the driver and the horses; The horses represent the sense organs of perception (5 *jnānendriyan*) and organs of actions (5 *jnānendriyan*) ...Only a correct order will lead to the appropriate destination. The body, the intellect, the mind, the sense organs are all inert and activated only by the soul.

The end result is: the silencing of the mental and emotional activities empowering us to be focused on the subject matter of our pursuit: study, work, etc.

## Terms & Conditions for the successful application of Yoga

The Yoga philosophy states: *Sa tu dirgha-kāla-nairantarya-satkār-āsevito dridha-bhumi* (Y.D 1.14), that is - the practice of Yoga (*sa tu*) needs to be over a long time (*dirgha kāla*), constant / regular (*nairantarya*), and total commitment, passion, devotion (*satkār-āsevitah*).

***Success in any field is achieved only on the above terms and conditions, be it - the upbringing of children, sports, studies, research, discoveries and inventions, meditation for self-realisation and God-realisation, etc..*** These are no new theories; they originate from the Vedas and subsequently encoded by sages.

## The hurdles to progress

The treatise on Yoga is a recipe for life and also describes the obstacles to the in our practice. A close scrutiny of aphorism 1.30 exposes the 9 hurdles as: (a) *Vyādhi* - physical imbalance, sickness ...; (b) *Styāna* – playing truant in our practice; (c) *Sanshaya* – doubts; (d) *Pramāda* – irresponsible, unconcerned attitude; (e) *Ālasya* – little or no consideration to put up our utmost efforts to realise our goals; (f) *Avirati* – extravagance, overindulgence in the subject matter of our senses; (g) *Bhrāntidarshan* – contrary knowledge; (h) *Alabdhabhumikatwa* – failure; (i) *Anavasthitatwa* – letting go / absence of any effort to consolidate realisations. These not only pertain to Yoga, but to all pursuits in life.

## The wake-up call to be ever careful

Unresolved, these hurdles disturbs tranquillity and focus and leads to physical and mental ailments, (a) grief (*dukkha*) ; (b) post-failure irritation (*dauramanasya*); (c) shaking of limbs

(*angamejayatwa*); and (d) irregular breathing process (*shwāsa prashwāsa*), more fully described in aphorism 1.31 of the Yoga Darshanam.

***Therefore there is need to have proper diets; a proper timetable incorporating physical exercises, play, quietude, learning ...etc.; a balanced life style; and not to waste our time and energy which hinders physical, mental... development and ultimately society at large.***

The terms and conditions to success are:

1. Yoga (meditation) as part and parcel of our daily routine assist us to harmonise our mind, body and spirit, and develop both creative and critical thinking skills (*medhā buddhi*).
2. Yoga triggers us to be responsible and accountable for our behaviour, to put up our utmost efforts in accomplishing our tasks and to achieve higher levels of peace, progress and prosperity.
3. Yoga confers the insight to face competition as part of the normal course of life ...and not to view competitors as enemies.
4. The first two steps (*Yama & Niyama*) of the eight-fold process of Yoga are the dos and don'ts, a universal code of conduct for righteous living ...we shall be a better individual, a member of our family and society, and hence yield our country and world as better places.
5. Yoga empowers us to be focused like Arjun who saw only the target in the archery competition; he correctly aimed upwards at the eye of the spinning wooden bird while watching at the reflection in a bucket of water.

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